VOLUME 1: CHAPTER 4: SCOPE AND CONSULTATION

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4. SCOPE AND CONSULTATION

4.1 Introduction

4.1.1 The Electricity Works (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Scotland) Regulations 2017 ("the EIA Regulations") require that an EIA should describe the likely significant effects of a proposed development on the environment. Scoping of potential likely significant effects having regard to the physical impacts of a proposed development provides a basis for ensuring that the assessment of environmental effects is appropriately limited to issues of genuine potential significance. This ensures a proportionate approach to EIA that is focused on likely significant effects to be considered and assessed. Consultation and engagement with stakeholders early in the process, with advice and input from key consultees being sought at the early stages of a project, helps greatly to inform decisions about the design and EIA work for a proposed development.

4.1.2 This Chapter describes the pre-application consultation, the scoping process and further consultation that was undertaken to determine the scope of the EIA Report, and the consultations that were undertaken to inform the local community of the Proposed Development. This Chapter also includes a brief description of the environmental receptors of potential significance associated with the Proposed Development which are addressed in detail in the EIA Report, and those that are scoped out.

4.2 Route and Alignment Stage Consultation

4.2.1 SSEN Transmission has sought to maintain an open dialogue with local communities within the vicinity of the Proposed Development throughout the evolution of the project. This has included carrying out consultation events during the route and alignment selection stages, engaging with local elected members such as Ward Councillors and Community Councils and engaging with landowners, residents, community groups and businesses that may be affected by the Proposed Development. SSEN Transmission has held parallel communication with other stakeholders, including statutory consultees, to understand their views on the proposals at the route and alignment selection stages, which has led to key areas of design evolution and development.

4.2.2 In March 2022, a virtual public consultation was carried out[1], with route options for the Proposed Development presented to members of the public, along with information on other separate wind farm grid connections that were being progressed at the time by the Applicant.

4.2.3 Upon consideration of a rationalised approach for the Connagill Cluster Grid Connection projects, including the Proposed Development (as discussed in **Chapter 2 – The Routeing Process and Alternatives**), a further in-person public consultation event took place in November 2023, to present the appraisal of the rationalised route options proposed for each grid connection. This was followed by the issue of the Connagill Cluster Grid Connections Consultation Document (Route Stage)[2], published in December 2023. Comments received from all stakeholders (including members of the public) in response to the Consultation Document, or following the consultation event, were documented in a Report on Consultation (Route Stage), published in April 2024[3]. The Report on Consultation also confirmed the proposed route to be taken forward to the alignment selection stage, and outlined the Applicant's responses provided at route stage consultation, along with confirmation of the action to be taken, where relevant.

[1] Virtual consultation was carried out in accordance with Scottish Government's Guidance on pre-application consultation for major planning applications during the Covid-19 emergency period.
[2] Connagill Cluster Grid Connections: Consultation Document (Route Stage) (December 2023), produced by SSEN Transmission. Available at: https://www.ssen-transmission.co.uk/globalassets/projects/connagill-cluster-documents/connagill-cluster-grid-connections---routeing-consultation-document.pdf
[3] Connagill Cluster Grid Connections: Report on Consultation (Route Stage) (April 2024), produced by SSEN Transmission. Available at: https://www.ssen-transmission.co.uk/globalassets/projects/connagill-cluster-documents/2024-consultation-documents/report-on-consultation-routeing-stage---connagill-cluster---april-2024.pdf

4.2.4 Following confirmation of the proposed route, the appraisal of alignment options for the various grid connections associated with the Connagill Cluster Grid Connections (including the Proposed Development) was set out in the Connagill Cluster Grid Connections Consultation Document (Alignment Stage)[4] and presented at a public consultation event, in May 2024. Comments received from all stakeholders in response were documented in a Report on Consultation (Alignment Stage), published in September 2024[5]. The Report on Consultation confirmed the proposed alignment to be taken forward to the EIA stage, and also outlined the Applicant's responses provided at alignment stage consultation, along with confirmation of the action to be taken, where relevant.

4.2.5 Both the route and alignment stage consultation processes, the consultation responses and SSEN Transmission's response to these and the subsequent action that was taken where relevant are discussed in further detail in **Appendix 4.1: Public Consultation Report**.

4.3 Screening

4.3.1 As outlined in **Chapter 1 - Introduction and Background**, a Screening Opinion was sought for the Strathy Wood Grid Connection from Scottish Ministers by the Applicant in April 2019 for a trident 'H' wood pole connection. The Screening Opinion provided by the Scottish Ministers in June 2019 determined that the Proposed Development constitutes 'EIA Development' under the terms of the EIA Regulations, and the application for consent under section 37 of the 1989 Act should be accompanied by an EIA Report (see **Appendix 1.1: Strathy Wood Wind Farm Grid Connection Electricity Act (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Scotland) Regulations 2017: Screening Opinion (June 2019)**).

4.3.2 As the technology type proposed has since changed from trident 'H' wood pole to steel lattice tower, the Applicant has taken the decision to produce this EIA Report to accompany an application for consent, without requesting a further EIA Screening Opinion from the Scottish Ministers.

4.4 Scoping

4.4.1 A Scoping Report was submitted to Scottish Ministers by the Applicant in April 2020 to support a formal request under Regulation 12 of the EIA Regulations for a Scoping Opinion to determine the information to be provided within the EIA Report. A Scoping Opinion was provided by the Scottish Ministers in December 2020.

4.4.2 Given the change in technology type proposed (from trident 'H' wood pole to steel lattice tower), as well as the time that has since lapsed, the Applicant sought a further Scoping Opinion from the Scottish Ministers in 2024. The EIA Scoping Report[6] was issued in January 2024 (see **Appendix 4.2: Scoping Report - January 2024**) and the Scoping Opinion of the Scottish Ministers was issued in August 2024 (see **Appendix 4.3: Scoping Opinion - August 2024**).

4.4.3 The responses, contained within the 2024 Scoping Opinion, were considered in detail during the EIA process. **Appendix 4.4: Scoping Matrix** includes a matrix detailing the key issues that were raised in the Scoping Opinion and how and where they are addressed in the EIA Report.

[4] Connagill Cluster Grid Connections: Consultation Document (Alignment Stage) (May 2024), produced by SSEN Transmission. Available at: https://www.ssen-transmission.co.uk/globalassets/projects/connagill-cluster-documents/2024-consultation-documents/conngaill-cluster-grid-connections---alignment.pdf

[5] Connagill Cluster Grid Connections: Report on Consultation (Alignment Stage) (September 2024), produced by SSEN Transmission. Available at: report-on-consultation-alignment-stage-september-2024.pdf (ssen-transmission.co.uk)

[6] Strathy Wood Wind Farm Grid Connection: Scoping Report (January 2024), produced by SSEN Transmission

4.5 Key Scoping Issues

4.5.1 The 2024 Scoping Opinion makes reference to site specific issues of interest to the Scottish Ministers, to be considered and addressed in addition to those laid out in responses from consultees. The issues raised were as follows.

Route Selection

"Scottish Ministers request that justification of Route Selection is included in the EIA Report."

4.5.2 **Chapter 2** of this EIA Report sets out the alternative options considered and discusses the reasons for identifying the proposed alignment and design solution.

Drinking Water Protected Areas

"*Scottish Water provided information on whether there are any drinking water protected areas or Scottish Water assets on which the development could have any significant effect. Scottish Ministers request that the company contacts Scottish Water…and makes further enquiries to confirm whether there are any Scottish Water assets which may be affected by the development, and includes details in the EIA report of any relevant mitigation measures to be provided.*

Scottish Ministers request that the Company investigates the presence of any private water supplies which may be impacted by the development. The EIA report should include details of any supplies identified by this investigation, and if any supplies are identified, the Company should provide an assessment of the potential impacts, risks, and any mitigation which would be provided."

4.5.3 The presences of Drinking Water Protected Areas (DWPA), Scottish Water assets and private water supplies have been investigated as part of the assessment of impacts on the water environment (see **Chapter 9 - Soils, Geology and Water**). Further consultation with Scottish Water was not required as Scottish Water's scoping response provided all the required information. This along with published data sets was sufficient for the assessment as discussed in the noted chapter.

Aquatic Ecology

"[Marine Directorate – Science Evidence Data and Digital (MD-SEDD)] provide generic scoping guidelines for overhead line development…which outline how fish populations can be impacted during the construction, operation and decommissioning of a wind farm development or overhead line development and informs developers as to what should be considered, in relation to freshwater and diadromous fish and fisheries, during the EIA process.

"*In addition to identifying the main watercourses and waterbodies within and downstream of the proposed development area, developers should identify and consider, at this early stage, any areas of Special Areas of Conservation where fish are a qualifying feature and proposed felling operations particularly in acid sensitive areas.*

*"*MD-SEDD *also provide generic standing advice for overhead line development…which outlines what information, relating to freshwater and diadromous fish and fisheries, is expected in the EIA report. Use of the checklist provided, should ensure that the EIA report contains the required information; the absence of such information may necessitate requesting additional information which may delay the process. Developers are required to submit the completed checklist in advance of their application submission.*"

4.5.4 Potential effects on fish and aquatic ecology are discussed within **Chapter 7 - Ecology**. The likely effects of the Proposed Development on watercourses and waterbodies are discussed and assessment in **Chapter 9**. The requested checklist, containing all required information, has been provided to MD-SEDD along with submission of the application.

Peat Landslide Risk

"*Scottish Ministers consider that where there is demonstrable requirement for peat landslide hazard and risk assessment (PLHRA), the assessment should be undertaken as part of the EIA process to provide Ministers with a clear understanding of whether the risks are acceptable and capable of being controlled by mitigation measures. The Peat Landslide Hazard and Risk Assessments: Best Practice Guide for Proposed Electricity Generation Developments (Second Edition)…should be followed in the preparation of the EIA report, which should contain such assessment and details of mitigation measures.*

4.5.5 A PLHRA has been carried out as part of the EIA Report and included in **Appendix 9.1: Peat Landslide Hazard and Risk Assessment (PLHRA)** and referenced in **Chapter 9** of the EIA Report.

Visualisation Viewpoints

"*Scottish Ministers advise that Viewpoints should be prepared to inform and support the Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment ('LVIA') and must be agreed in advance of preparation with The Highland Council and NatureScot. The Highland Council also advised that it is not possible to use panoramic images for the purposes of visual impact assessment.*"

4.5.6 Photomontage visualisations have been prepared to support the LVIA, included within Volume 3a and Volume 3b. The viewpoint location is described in **Chapter 6 – Landscape and Visual**. The Scoping Report identified the viewpoint location for the preparation of the visualisation. The Highland Council confirmed in their scoping response that they were content with the viewpoint location selected.

Pre-application Consultation

"*Ministers expect Company's* [sic] *to conduct adequate pre-application consultation and to demonstrate what alternatives to the proposal were considered before arriving at the design they apply for. Ministers agree with the Planning Authority that the EIA should include a description of the main development alternatives which are relevant to the proposal and its specific characteristics, and an indication of the main reasons for selecting the chosen option, including a comparison of the environmental effects.*

4.5.7 As noted earlier in this Chapter, pre-application consultation was carried out throughout the project, including a formal Scoping exercise, public consultation via public exhibitions at routeing and alignment selection stages, and consultation with community councils. This is further detailed in **Appendix 4.1**. Alternatives to the Proposed Development are discussed in **Chapter 2**.

Further Consultation

"Ministers are aware that further engagement is required between parties regarding the refinement of the design of the proposed development regarding, among other things, surveys, management plans, peat, finalisation of viewpoints, cultural heritage, cumulative assessments and request that they are kept informed of relevant discussions."

4.5.8 Further consultation has been undertaken with relevant consultees on the noted topics, where required. Scottish Ministers have been kept informed of any further discussions with consultees during the Gate Check process (see Section 4.7).

Mitigation Measures

"*The Scottish Ministers are required to make a reasoned conclusion on the significant effects of the proposed development on the environment as identified in the environmental impact assessment. The mitigation measures suggested for any significant environmental impacts identified should be presented as a conclusion to each chapter. Applicants are also asked to provide a consolidated schedule of all mitigation measures proposed in the environmental assessment, provided in tabular form, where that mitigation is relied upon in relation to reported conclusions of likelihood or significance.*"

4.5.9 Proposed mitigation measures are described towards the end of each technical chapter (Chapter 6 – 13), following assessment of likely significant effects. **Chapter 3 – The Proposed Development** also includes some general mitigation measures which apply across the Proposed Development. All proposed mitigation measures set out throughout the EIA Report are collated within a tabulated Schedule of Mitigation, included in **Chapter 14 – Schedule of Mitigation**.

4.6 Further Consultee Engagement

4.6.1 Stakeholder consultation has been ongoing since the early stages of the project and has continued throughout the Scoping and EIA process. As described in Section 4.2 of this Chapter and in **Appendix 4.1**, during the route and alignment selection stages of the project, stakeholders were given the opportunity to provide feedback on the route, alignment and design solution options identified, and all responses received were summarised in the relevant report on consultation documents[3,5].

4.6.2 **Table 4.1** provides a summary of some of the key meetings and engagement that was undertaken by the Applicant with statutory consultees during the routeing, alignment and EIA stages of the project. Where more specific consultation has been carried out with consultees, this is detailed within the relevant topic chapters.

Table 4.1: Summary of Further Consultee Engagement

Consultee	Date	Summary of Engagement
Statutory Consultee Meeting	March 2022	Attended by SSEN Transmission and representatives from The Highland Council (THC), NatureScot and Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA) to allow SSEN the opportunity to provide an update on their obligation to provide several wind farm grid connections (all at various stages of development), all converging into Connagill 275/132 kV substation. SSEN Transmission discussed with the statutory consultees the potential for a rationalised approach to development. Feedback received from the statutory consultees was supportive of a rationalised approach. THC queried whether the existing Strathy North 132 kV OHL could be incorporated into the rationalisation which SSEN Transmission confirmed they were happy to take away and consider.
NatureScot	April 2022	Consultation with NatureScot to confirm that given the Applicant is considering the rationalisation of grid connections on larger steel lattice structures, a further breeding bird survey will take place over the summer of 2022. NatureScot were grateful for the update.
NatureScot	March 2023	Consultation with NatureScot on the requirement for further bat surveys given the suite of ecological surveys available for the area that would provide sufficient information to inform a robust impact assessment on the effects of the development to bats without completing additional field surveys. In their response received on 17th April 2023, NatureScot agreed that further field surveys would be unnecessary and that the survey information collected from recently submitted wind farms to the national database could be relied upon to inform an impact assessment. However, where survey data was beginning to 'get old', and there is a likelihood of bat activity, further work was advised to be undertaken. Further bat activity surveys were completed in

		2022 across the Proposed Development and more widely across the Connagill Cluster Grid Connections.
NatureScot	May 2023	Consultation with NatureScot on the requirement for further terrestrial protected species surveys (for badger, pine marten and wildcat) given the suite of ecological surveys available for the area that would provide sufficient information to inform a robust impact assessment of the effects of the development with regards to these species. The Applicant proposed to update surveys for otter and water vole given these species are likely more sensitive to the scope of the developments. In their response received on the 8th June 2023, NatureScot agreed that existing data on terrestrial protected species was sufficient to inform an assessment and further surveys for terrestrial protected species were not required.
Statutory Consultee Meeting	August 2023	A formal pre-application meeting was facilitated by THC and attended by SSEN Transmission and specialist officers from within THC. No external statutory consultees were able to attend the virtual meeting. At this meeting, SSEN Transmission delivered a presentation to provide an update on the Connagill Cluster Grid Connection projects (including the Proposed Development) and to seek preliminary feedback on route options and design solutions for each connection. This was followed with a round table discussion of comments and suggested actions in relation to the proposals. Following the meeting a Pre-Application Advice Report was issued by THC on 20th September 2023 (see **Appendix 4.5**)[7]. The Advice Report provided a note of the meeting and feedback on the information to be included in the EIA by key stakeholders.
Ministry of Defence (MoD)	October 2023	The THC Pre-Application Advice Report (**Appendix 4.5**) flagged that the Proposed Development overlaps an RAF Tactical Training Area. SSEN Transmission engaged with the MoD in October 2023 to make them aware of the proposal and to enquire as to whether any further information on the Proposed Development was required. No response was received.
NatureScot	June 2024	Pre-application discussions with NatureScot specifically in relation to the likely effect of the Proposed Development on the qualifying features of the Caithness and Sutherland Peatlands SAC and Flow Country World Heritage Site.
SEPA	June 2024	Further engagement with SEPA was undertaken in June 2024. This included the provision of information relating to peat depth, habitat data and local hydrology.
NatureScot	July 2024	Further engagement to seek clarification that NatureScot agree with elements proposed by the Applicant to be scoped out of the EIA (as set out in the January 2024 Scoping Report) which were not specifically commented upon in the NS scoping response.

[7] The Advice Report considered other grid connections that form part of the Connagill Cluster Grid Connections, in addition to the Proposed Development

The Highland Council	August 2024	Further engagement to respond on various matters highlighted within the THC scoping response with respect to the scope of the EIA.
ECU	October 2024	Pre-Application Gate Check Meeting to discuss application timescales and requirements.

4.7 Gate Check

4.7.1 In accordance with the guidance for gate checking procedures *Good Practice Guidance for Applications under Section 36 and 37 of the Electricity Act 1989*[8], a Gate Check Report was issued to the ECU and key stakeholders in September 2024. The purpose of the Gate Check Report is to outline consultations with statutory and non-statutory consultees, engagement with the local community and how matters raised during the scoping process have been dealt with in the EIA Report. Key stakeholders are invited to comment on the Gate Check Report to ensure they are satisfied with the approach taken within the EIA Report prior to submission of the section 37 application. A copy of the Gate Check Report is provided in **Appendix 4.6**.

4.7.2 Responses received from consultees to the Gate Check Report are summarised in **Table 4.2** along with the actions taken to address the comments.

Table 4.2: Summary of Gate Check Responses and Actions Taken

Consultee	Summary of Response	Action Taken
SEPA 23rd September 2024	SEPA reiterated their comments issued at scoping stage and confirmed that the Gate Check Report had not been reviewed. SEPA signposted the Applicant to their relevant standing applicable to Electricity Act applications.	The Applicant reviewed SEPA's standing advice.
MoD 30th September 2024	The MoD confirmed that they have no further comments.	N/A
Transport Scotland 4th October 2024	Transport Scotland confirmed that having reviewed the Gate Check Report, which presents the comments raised in Transport Scotland's scoping response and indicates that these comments will be addressed appropriately within a Traffic and Transport Assessment to be included within the EIA Report, that Transport Scotland have no further comment to make at this stage.	N/A
ScotWays 23rd October 2024	ScotWays note that the Applicant will consider the Scottish Hill Track [344] route within the EIA Report and will also include a draft Outdoor Access Management Plan. ScotWays confirmed they have no further comment to make at this stage.	N/A

[8] Good Practice Guidance for Applications under Section 36 and 37 of the Electricity Act 1989 (Energy Consents Unit, February 2022). [online] Available at: https://www.gov.scot/binaries/content/documents/govscot/publications/advice-and-guidance/2022/02/good-practice-guidance-applications-under-sections-36-37-electricity-act-1989/documents/energy-consents-unit-good-practice-guidance-applications-under-section-36-37-electricity-act-1989-february-2022/energy-consents-unit-good-practice-guidance-applications-under-section-36-37-electricity-act-1989-february-2022/govscot%3Adocument/energy-consents-unit-good-practice-guidance-applications-under-section-36-37-electricity-act-1989-february-2022.pdf [Last accessed September 2024].

4.8 Issues Scoped into the EIA Report

4.8.1 The following topics have been 'scoped in' to the EIA Report, as set out within the Scoping Report (see **Appendix 4.2**):

- Landscape and Visual;
- Ecology;
- Ornithology;
- Soils, Geology and Water;
- Cultural Heritage; and
- Traffic and Transport.

4.8.2 The Applicant has also taken the decision to conduct a forestry impact assessment given changes to the design of the access tracks since issue of the Scoping Report in January 2024. The Applicant intends to utilise the existing tracks through Strathy North Wind Farm and would construct a new permanent track linking the existing track, through Strathy Wood Forest, to access towers on the western extent of the River Strathy. The new track has been designed to be routed through largely windblown and decaying Lodgepole pine to minimise impacts, however some forestry felling would be required as a result and as such, despite being scoped out in the 2024 Scoping Report, a forestry assessment is included in the EIA Report, under **Chapter 12 - Forestry**, along with consideration of compensatory planting.

4.8.3 In addition, following receipt of the Scoping Opinion (**Appendix 4.3**), an assessment on socio-economic, tourism and recreation has been included within the EIA Report. These topics were initially scoped out within the Scoping Report (**Appendix 4.2**).

4.9 Issues Scoped out of the EIA Report

4.9.1 It is considered that the following topics do not require to be the subject of detailed EIA work as it is considered that they are not likely to give rise to significant effects. They were referred to in the Scoping Report (see **Appendix 4.2**) as topics to be scoped out from further consideration within the EIA Report.

Cultural Heritage (Designated Heritage Assets)

4.9.2 There are no designated heritage sites in the near surrounding area which would have significant visibility of the Proposed Development and would give rise to any significant direct or indirect effects. As such, a detailed assessment on designated heritage sites has been scoped out of **Chapter 10 - Cultural Heritage**, as agreed by Historic Environment Scotland (HES) in their scoping response.

Land Use and Agriculture

4.9.3 The majority of the land within the vicinity of the Proposed Development is Class 5.3, land capable of supporting improved grassland, according to the Macaulay System (now Hutton Institute) of Land Capability for Agriculture[9]. Other common land uses within the vicinity of the Proposed Development include shooting on estate land, and electrical or energy infrastructure, including the operational Strathy North Wind Farm and Strathy North 132 kV trident 'H' wood pole OHL.

4.9.4 As set out in in **Chapter 3**, land use impacts associated with the Proposed Development are anticipated to be minimal. The construction work may result in some temporary loss of land or access restriction; however, it is considered that this can be adequately managed through wayleave agreements with the relevant landowners. The permanent loss of land to tower / pole locations and the cable sealing end compound would be negligible

[9] The James Hutton Institute. (2020). *Land Capability for Agriculture in Scotland*. [online] Available at: https://www.hutton.ac.uk/learning/exploringscotland/land-capability-agriculture-scotland [Accessed 17.01.24].

and it would remain possible for grazing to continue around and under towers / poles during their operational lifetime.

4.9.5 As construction effects would be minimal, and as it would remain possible for grazing to continue around and under towers / poles during their operational lifetime, this topic has been scoped out of the EIA in its entirety. Dialogue would be maintained by the Applicant and the Principal Contractor with landowners throughout the construction period to ensure any potential disruption as a result of the proposed works is kept to a minimum.

4.9.6 No contaminated land has been identified within the vicinity of the Proposed Development, therefore, no contaminated land assessment has been undertaken.

Population and Human Health

4.9.7 The Proposed Development is located within a remote rural area. There are no main settlements that are within the general vicinity of the Proposed Development. The closest residential settlements are limited to include Strathy approximately 4 km to the north and Lednaguillin approximately 5 km to the north-west from the Proposed Development.

4.9.8 Possible effects associated with construction and operation of the Proposed Development in relation to population and human health could include the following, and a summary is included for each point in relation to it being scoped out of this EIA:

- Noise and vibration during the construction phase:
    - Construction noise and vibration would be short term and intermittent and could be controlled through the implementation of a Noise Management Plan, which would be developed as part of the CEMP prepared by the Principal Contractor. The Noise Management Plan would be agreed with The Highland Council as Local Authority, and all construction activities would be undertaken in accordance with good practice guidelines set out in BS 5228-1 and BS 5228-2. As such, and given the remoteness of construction activity for much of the project, no detailed assessment of construction noise and vibration associated with plant noise or traffic was proposed as part of the EIA.
- Operational effects of noise from the OHL:
    - The Applicant has given consideration to the National Grid Technical Guidance Note TGN(E)322 (2021) and given the nature of the Proposed Development, its remoteness and distance from residential dwellings, no operational noise effects are expected, so no inclusion was proposed as part of the EIA.
- Electric and Magnetic Fields (EMF):
    - EMFs arise from electric charges and current flow. The UK Health Protection Agency (HPA) is the government body responsible for policy and guidance of EMFs. Exposure guidelines for transmission lines have been developed by the International Commission on Non-Ionising Radiation Protection (ICNIRP) to ensure protection of human health in different situations, occupational exposure and public exposure which have been adopted by the HPA for application in the UK. In addition, the line will operate at 132 kV which generates a lower level of EMF. The Proposed Development would adhere to the relevant regulations and guidance relating to EMF including the UK Department of Energy & Climate Change (DECC) policy 'Power Lines: Demonstrating compliance with EMF public exposure guidelines - A voluntary code of practise' (2012). This policy states that the exposure limits are 9 kV/m for Electric Fields and 360 µT for Magnetic Fields underneath a 132 kV OHL. The Proposed Development would not exceed these voluntary requirements, and it has therefore been concluded that no likely significant effect on human health associated with EMFs is predicted and has been scoped out of the assessment in its entirety from this EIA.

- Operational effects of additional electromagnetic interference (EMI) to medium and long wave (AM) radio signals and TV signals:
    - Electromagnetic interference to medium and long wave (AM) radio signals at properties within close proximity to OHLs can be known to occur. Corona discharge is unlikely to cause significant interference to VHF reception (i.e. FM radio or digital radio and television which operate in the UHF range). Micro-gap discharge can affect digital television and radio reception but is not considered to be a source of long-term annoyance as equipment is built and maintained to high standards and any such discharge would be the subject of remedial action. Impacts to digital television, digital radio and FM radio reception was therefore scoped out of the assessment in its entirety from this EIA.
    - Potential effects from OHLs on TV signals can occur due to physical obstruction of the signal. The Proposed Development would not represent a significant obstruction, and it is not anticipated that any adverse effects on TV reception would be experienced. The operation of high voltage OHLs can generate electromagnetic fields over a wide range of frequencies, from power (50 Hz) to radio frequencies. It is anticipated that the Proposed Development would emit low-level radio frequency interference (RFI) but that in practice little radio and television interference would arise, except when directly beneath the OHL. Therefore, this topic has been scoped out of the EIA in its entirety.

Air Quality and Climate Change

4.9.9 There is a potential for the Proposed Development to give rise to some localised and temporary construction related releases associated with dust and construction traffic exhaust emissions. However, the nature of construction activities means these would be localised, short term and intermittent. Emissions associated with the Proposed Development would be limited to temporary and short-term emissions of exhaust gases from vehicles and construction plant, and the potential for the release of carbon dioxide as a result of dewatering and exposing peat and peat soils during construction. Neither source is considered likely to be significant in terms of global warming potential (GWP) [10]. Any potential effects would further be minimised through the implementation of mitigation measures, in particular the project CEMP, which will be produced prior to construction starting by the Applicant and Principal Contractor. An Outline CEMP can be seen in **Appendix 3.7: Outline CEMP** and relevant General Environmental Management Plans (GEMPs), which would be included within the CEMP, are listed in **Appendix 3.5: GEMP**. Longer term, emissions would be limited to traffic exhaust emissions from intermittent maintenance vehicles, which is not considered likely to be significant in terms of GWP.

4.9.10 With regard to climate adaptation, consideration has been and would continue to be given to the potential implications of climate change on the OHL design and the design of tower support structures (e.g. design for increased flood risk and adverse weather); however, no potential for impacts have been identified.

4.9.11 The Proposed Development would contribute to connecting renewable electricity generation capacity to the transmission network, in turn displacing emissions associated with fossil fuel-based electricity generation elsewhere. As such, this issue is scoped out of the EIA and no detailed assessment of air quality and climate change is included as part of this EIA Report.

Accidents and Disasters

4.9.12 Potentially significant effects which can arise in relation to accidents and disasters from developments of this type include severe weather events and structural damage to towers or poles, as well as the potential for risks during the construction phase.

[10] GWP is an index to measure how much infrared thermal radiation a greenhouse gas would absorb over a given time frame after it has been added to the atmosphere (or emitted to the atmosphere)

4.9.13 Given the nature of the Proposed Development, the potential for effects related to the vulnerability to accidents and disasters are likely to be limited to those associated with unplanned power outages, due to extreme weather or structural damage. Crisis management and continuity plans are in place across the SSE Group. These are tested regularly and are designed for the management of, and recovery from, significant energy infrastructure failure events. Where there are material changes in infrastructure (or the management of it) additional plans are developed.

4.9.14 Furthermore, the Principal Designer would need to fully assess risks and mitigate as appropriate during the construction stage as part of the requirements of the Construction (Design and Management) Regulations (2015).

4.9.15 Potential significant effects relating to the vulnerability of the Proposed Development to accidents and disasters has therefore been scoped out of this EIA Report in its entirety.

4.10 Other Issues

Aviation

4.10.1 The Proposed Development would not infringe the safeguarding criteria and operation of Wick Airport (the closest airport to the Proposed Development), and so no assessment on aviation has been included in the EIA Report. This was confirmed in the scoping response from Highlands and Islands Airports Limited (HIAL).

4.10.2 It is acknowledged that the Proposed Development falls within part of the UK Military Low Flying System designated Tactical Training Area, an area within which military aircraft may conduct low level flight training. The MoD confirmed in their scoping response that they had no safeguarding concerns subject to sufficient data being submitted to ensure structures are accurately chartered to allow deconfliction.

Other Factors Identified in the EIA Regulations

4.10.3 The EIA Regulations introduced a number of factors to be considered within an EIA Report; specifically, those factors listed under Regulations 4(3) and 4(4), and Schedule 4. **Table 4.3** describes how this EIA Report has addressed these factors.

Table 4.3: Assessment of Factors Identified in Regulations 4(3), 4(4) and Schedule 4

Topic	Potential for Significant Effects
Population and Human Health	This Chapter considers potential effects relating to population and human health from EMF, EMI, air quality, noise and / or vibration effects in Section 4.9: Scoped-out Issues. Potential effects on water supplies are considered in **Chapter 9**.
Biodiversity (in particular species and habitats protected under Council Directive 92/43/EEC on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora)	The requirement to consider effects on biodiversity is addressed in **Chapter 7** and **Chapter 8.**
Land and Soil (and natural resources availability)	The potential effects on geological receptors, peat and groundwater resources are considered **Chapter 9.**
Water (and natural resource availability)	The potential effects on the water environment are considered in **Chapter 9.**

Air and Climate	This Chapter considers potential effects on air and climate in Section 4.9: Scoped-out Issues.
Material Assets, Cultural Heritage	The potential effects on the cultural heritage assets as a result of the Proposed Development are considered in **Chapter 10**. This Chapter considers potential effects on designated heritage sites in Section 4.9: Scoped-out Issues.
Landscape	**Chapter 6** considers the potential effects of the Proposed Development on landscape.
Major Accidents and Disasters	This Chapter considers potential effects relating to major accidents and disasters under Section 4.9: Scoped-out Issues.
Interaction Between Factors (cumulative effects)	The approach to cumulative effects is outlined within **Chapter 5 - EIA Process and Methodology** and is considered within each of the technical chapters (6 – 13) where appropriate.